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SUBJECT Interview with President Marcos

BOB EDWARDS: Joining me now from Manila is the President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos.

Mr. President, this week you reinstated General Fabian Ver shortly after he was acquitted in the Aquino murder trial. Why did you reinstate him?

PRESIDENT FERDINAND MARCOS: It was a promise and a word of honor that if he was acquitted, he would be reinstated. And this was with the approval of the senior officers of the armed forces in the presence of the Vice Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Fidel Ramos. But we didn't say how long he's going to stay.

He now belongs to a board of generals which I want to utilize to reorganize the entire armed forces. And this will probably last a few days. After that, anything goes.

EDWARDS: That was a very unpopular move on your part.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I know. Well, I do not break my word when I give it. And it was given to the officers of the armed forces of the Philippines. And it seems to me like it is unjust. After a man has voluntarily sought a leave of absence because he didn't want to drag in the armed forces if he is to be punished, after he is acquitted -- and no matter what we say, the decision, as far as we are concerned, is a decision of our court. And it seems to be well reasoned out.

So, while it may be unpopular with those who do not understand the decision, who have not studied it too well, we lawyers feel that justice has been done and that it would be

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unfair if, after acquittal, he should be punished further.

But as I said, we probably will utilize his talents to help reorganize the armed forces because he is one of the pillars of the armed forces. Then after that we'll see whether he should continue or not.

EDWARDS: Opposition members of Parliament have petitioned the Philippine Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional the bill setting up the February election because you haven't stepped down from office. Why haven't you stepped down?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No president, when he runs for reelection, steps down from office. President Reagan did not. Nobody, not even here in the Philippines. When you run for office, you don't declare a vacancy. Because, otherwise, there'd be a dangerous hiatus.

And incidentally, it's [unintelligible] the members of Parliament. Probably one-third of the opposition, which would be about 10, are among the petitioners.

And incidentally, under our constitution, the President continues in office when he's running for reelection. And that's what I am. I'm running for reelection. It's the tradition in every democracy that the president, the members of the legislature, governors, mayors continue in office until after the election.

EDWARDS: There's been an erosion in foreign investment since the assassination of Benigno Aquino. Do you take that as a sign of no confidence in your government?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, no, no. It started when the Mexican default on the indebtedness started [unintelligible]. And that was before August 21, 1983, which was the assassination of Mr. Aquino.

And incidentally, it did not affect investment that bad. But it did cause a lot of political tension in the Philippines, because I myself denounced it as a shameless and treacherous act for which the entire Filipino people are degraded and feel ashamed.

Incidentally, I tried to keep him from coming to the Philippines. We asked him to stay put until we could eliminate the -- or neutralize the alleged conspiracy to assassinate him when he gets to the Philippines.

EDWARDS: The Reagan Administration and members of

Congress in the United States say that you risk losing all support at home and from here in Washington if the elections are not free and fair. What assurances do the opposition parties have?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I can promise you that it will be free and fair. We will encourage observers to come in here. We will allow them to look at everything that happens. And I think that, by and large, the '84 elections, 1984 elections for our Parliament or legislature was fair and honest, so much so that they won one-third, the opposition won one-third of the members of our legislature.

So, we say it will be fair and honest.

EDWARDS: What about your opponent, Mrs. Aquino?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, she wouldn't run if she thought it wouldn't be fair and honest. That's for sure. And she has declared that she is a candidate. But so has Laurel, I guess, the other opposition candidate. And we will give them all the safeguards so that it will be fair and honest.

What we're worried about is the use of force and violence by the New People's Army and the Communist Party, which seems to be supporting them.

EDWARDS: Supporting Laurel and Aquino?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes. This is the report from the field.

EDWARDS: If they form a coalition to run together against you, will they be a more formidable opponent for you?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: In all probability, they will acquire more support. Because right now they will divide their supporters if they both run. We hope that they will be able to consolidate and present one single candidate for president, another single candidate for vice president.

EDWARDS: Who will be running with you as the vice presidential candidate?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: We haven't decided yet. But I have been given the mandate to choose who should be the vice presidential candidate. Right now this has come down to six or seven, but I'm not free to divulge the names.

EDWARDS: Is your wife among those six or seven?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, no. She's not running. She's

not running for vice president. That's for sure. Nor for president.

EDWARDS: How is your health?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: My health is good, thank God. In 1960 and 1961, I was operated on for shrapnel in the lower abdomen, right abdomen. And that's what started all this talk about my abdomen, my kidneys, my liver, and everything else. But right now I am back to my exercises. I do my push-ups, my military press. I walk four to five kilometers a day. I do all the exercises I used to do, only cut in half, and as well as could be expected at the age of 68.

EDWARDS: Your health won't be an issue in the campaign?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I don't think so, because [unintelligible] campaigning to show to them that I have probably more stamina than most of their leaders.

EDWARDS: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, speaking with us from Manila.